



THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
GENERAL SECTION  
MILITARY HISTORY COMMITTEE  
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

ADVANCED OFFICERS COURSE  
1946-1947

THE OPERATIONS OF A PROVISIONAL OSS PLATOON  
NIGHT RECONNAISSANCE OPERATIONS  
THE ARAKAN COAST, BURMA, OCT. 1944-APR. 1945  
(INDIA-BURMA CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal experience of an S-2, S-3)

Type of operation described: AMPHIBIOUS LANDINGS BY  
UNITS OF PLATOON STRENGTH, OR LESS, FOR PURPOSES OF  
LIMITED RECONNAISSANCE.

Captain Martin J. Waters, Jr., Infantry

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	3
The Story of the Provisional OSS Platoon.	16
Operation "Able".....	25
Operation "Baker".....	30
Operation "Charlie".....	33
Operation "Fox".....	37
Operation "George".....	40
Finale.....	43
Analysis and Criticisms.....	44
Lessons Learned.....	47
Appendix.....	48
Special Map "A": Burma	
Special Map "B": Uga and Zikha	
Special Map "C": West Baronga Island	
Special Map "D": Cheduba Island	
Diagram: Armament of Fairmiles ML	
Sketch: "Charlie"	

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. "Wrath in Burma" -- Fred Eldridge
2. "The Campaign in Burma" -- His Majesty's Central Office of Information
3. Operations overlays, maps, written orders, diagrams, terrain analyses, notes, and reports in the writer's possession.

## AUTHOR'S COMMENT

The material for the introduction, particularly dates and movements of troops, was taken from sources 1 and 2 above. Of that material, source 1 supplied all the data on the Chinese Burma Campaign; while Source 2 supplied the data on the campaigns of the British, both in the northwest and on the Arakan. Wherever possible, the writer checked dates and movements of troops as given in sources 1 and 2 against those appearing in periodicals, i.e., "Time", "Field Artillery Journal".

The material for the specific OSS operations described in the pages following the introduction was taken from the author's personal files.

THE OPERATIONS OF A PROVISIONAL OSS PLATOON  
NIGHT RECONNAISSANCE OPERATIONS  
THE ARAKAN COAST, BURMA, OCT. 1944-APR. 1945  
(INDIA-BURMA CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal experience of an S-2, S-3)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of a provisional OSS platoon, known as the First OG Platoon, in a series of night landings made on the Arakan coast of Burma during the period from October, 1944 to April 1945.

In order for the reader to understand the role of amphibious forces in the Burma Campaign it will be necessary for him to become more fully acquainted with the campaign itself.

The operations of American, British, and Chinese forces in Burma were so greatly over-shadowed in the newspapers and news-reels by the campaigns in Europe and the Pacific islands that many home-coming soldiers and airmen from CBI felt that they should carry leaflets describing the Burma Campaign. The writer of this monograph is in effect including such a leaflet for the benefit of the average reader, who, if he is at all typical, doesn't even know where Burma is located.

Actually, Burma deserves particular mention as the land which conquered its conquerors. The Japs who struggled through the humid jungles, the gushing mountain streams, the muddy paddy-fields and the almost vertical ascents and descents of the northern and western mountain masses became so exhausted physically, so depleted in numbers by the ravages of malaria, dysentery, scabies, and jungle sores, and so short of supplies (which could not be easily

replenished over those torturous routes to the north and west) that their mad gallop across Thailand and the flat-lands of southern and central Burma slowed down to little more than a blind stagger at the India-Burma border. And then the monsoon rains came to seal off the mountain passes into India with a wall of mud.

Just as truly as Napoleon's troops had been stopped by the scorched earth of Russia, the forces of Hirohito were beaten by the jungles of Burma in May, 1942. By the time the Japs had caught their collective breath, extricated themselves from the mud, and regrouped their units, they found the British, Indian, and Chinese troops dug in on the India-Burma frontier in sufficient force to bar the way to the open plains of Bengal and Assam.

Through the years that followed, Burma remained a thorn in Hirohito's side. How he must have hated that green hell which stood between him and his cherished dreams of linking forces with Hitler at the Dardanelles and Port Said!

With the Japs effectively halted, at least temporarily, the Allied forces could begin to think of measures which were not purely defensive in nature. The Allied Chiefs of Staff worked out lines of command and issued directives covering the missions of the polyglot troops assembled and assembling in India.

Britain's dominant interest in Burma was recognized by the investment of General Wavell as Commander in Chief of all forces in India. Chiang Kai Shek was named commander of the China area; and General Stilwell, at Chiang's request, became the Generalissimo's Chief of Staff as

well as Commander of the Chinese Expeditionary Forces -- all this in addition to his duties as Commanding General of all American forces in CBI.

Stilwell had first appeared in Burma as head of an American Military Mission with orders to supervise the distribution of lend-lease aid to China and to do everything in his power to aid the Chinese war-effort. This mission was now amplified to include the opening of a land route to China as soon as practicable, with expansion of air-supply via the "Hump" route as a stop-gap in the interim.

A large-scale allied counter-offensive in the remaining months of 1942 was, however, out of the question, although, on purely tactical grounds the counter-blow should have been delivered while the enemy was licking his wounds -- that is to say, immediately. The British high command was reluctant to move too many troops out of India for fear that the Hindus would seize the opportunity to call for a general uprising. This situation, plus the need of outposting a 700 mile front, absorbed most of the divisions then available in India. So, initially, Wavell concentrated his energies on purely defensive measures.

The Indian divisions which had been mauled in the Jap invasion of Burma were refitted, restored to full strength, and regrouped with virgin divisions to form the two army corps which were to improve and man the defenses on the India-Burma frontier. Of these, IV Corps, with headquarters at Imphal was made responsible for the Patkai and Manipur Hill tracts in the northwest; and XV Corps took over the Arakan Hills defenses in the southwest.

Meanwhile, Stilwell, handicapped by the humid, pestilential training-base location assigned him by Wavell, had tremendous problems of his own. His only seasoned ground troops, the 38th and 22nd Chinese Divisions, had been seriously decimated during the retreat through Burma. Those of the 38th Division who had not been killed or wounded in battle, crossed into India in a fair state of health; but the 22nd Division was caught in the monsoon near Ft. Hertz, and most of the soldiers who dragged themselves across the Indian frontier had to be hospitalized for malaria, dysentery, jungle ulcers, and malnutrition. Lastly, Chinese soldiers flown in from China to bring these divisions up to strength were primarily paddy-field recruits who, therefore, had to be trained from the very beginning.

Nevertheless, Stilwell stated that he could place the 38th Division in the field by early 1943. Since the Hukawng Valley, the area assigned as the Chinese zone of operations, was, in its northern terminus, only lightly held by widely scattered Jap outposts, he believed that one division would be ample to secure a firm foothold in North Burma, initially, and additional footholds, subsequently, when the rehabilitated 22nd could take the field again.

True, the shifting of enemy troops from the northwest to the Hukawng Valley area could probably stop the Chinese cold, but a properly synchronized offensive by the British IV Corps in the Imphal area would prevent the reinforcing of the Hukawng Valley forces, might, initially, even divert a few regiments away from the valley.

This then was the plan which Stilwell laid before General Wavell and the Generalissimo in late '42. Chiang Kai Shek agreed to the employment of the 38th Division on this mission, but the British balked at a large-scale offensive for the reasons already mentioned above.

The resultant compromise plan limited British participation to a raid by General Orde Wingate's "LRPG's"\* in the northwest and to a diversionary attack by XV Corps on the Arakan front.

Thus January 1943 found XV Corps launching a half-hearted attempt to take Akyab, an island air-base on the northwest coast of Burma. The 14th Indian Division crossed the India-Burma frontier and advanced southeast in two columns, one on the north side of the Mayu range, the other on the south side. As initial objectives, the north column hoped to capture Rathedaung, the south column Foul Point, the southern tip of the Mayu peninsula.

In February, General Wingate slipped his "LRPG" columns across the India-Burma frontier from IV Corps' Imphal area, and disappeared into the jungle. Wingate's primary goal was the North Burma railroad system which he hoped to sever by multiple widely separated demolition charges in two general areas, namely: Mandalay and Lashio.

Meanwhile the Chinese 38th Division marched towards Ledo where it was to remain until such time as the success of British diversionary efforts would make its invasion of Burma propitious.

But things were not going well on the Arakan Coast. After pushing through Jap outposts, both columns of the 14th Indian Division ran into determined Japanese resistance; both columns suffered heavy casualties. When

\*Long-Range Penetration Group.



subsequent attacks failed to dislodge the enemy, the campaign was officially recognized as a failure. The withdrawal, accomplished in the face of continuous harassment by Jap infiltration units, was finally completed in April, whereupon the division was relieved and sent into the interior of India for a general overhauling.

Wingate's efforts, though widely publicized, were of no particular benefit as a send-off to the Chinese 38th. After three months of the cruel physical and mental torture which is an integral part of the game of hide-and-seek with a numerically superior enemy, the "LRPG's" had succeeded in blowing up the rail-lines between Mandalay and Myitkyina in several places, but Lashio was still many days' march away--too far for an exhausted group of men who had already seen too many of their number fall by the wayside. Wingate gave the order to disperse which, in the vernacular of the "LRPG", meant to break up into small units and head for the India-Burma border on divergent routes.

Of these small units, some made their way across the India-Burma border; others crossed over into China; many were never heard of again. Wingate claimed that two-thirds of his unit emerged. Veterans whom the writer knew personally said the actual figure was closer to one-third. But whatever the casualty toll, it was out of all proportion to what was accomplished in the way of damage to the Japanese supply lines to the north. Three B-25's could have done the same job in a few hours.

General Chiang Kai Shek's reaction to these failures was not without justification. He ordered General Stilwell to tear up his plans for the Chinese invasion of Burma.

Accordingly, Stilwell placed elements of the 38th Division on outpost duty to protect the American engineer units at work on the Ledo Road\* and ordered the balance of the 38th back into training camp.

Thus the results of the opening campaigns of 1943, in terms of progress made towards the destruction or surrender of the enemy forces in Burma were just about zero; and Wavell's India Command, which had the power of yea or nay over any and all projected offensives in Burma, began to feel the impact of a thoroughly aroused and very impatient Stilwell.

"Vinegar Joe's" vinegary remarks apparently carried to high places. At any rate, two meetings of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the first in June, the second in August, produced important changes in CBI.

The first conference resulted in a directive which reiterated the doctrine of all possible aid to China. "Aid" was stated specifically to mean, first, an increase in tonnage flown over the "Hump", and second, a land invasion of Burma effective in October, the end of the monsoon period.

The second conference produced a complete revamping of the High Command in India. The India Command under which Stilwell, though commander of all Chinese and American forces in India, was subordinate to General Wavell for operations, was superseded by a new command structure, henceforward to be known as SEAC\*\*. Wavell's India Command was stripped of all tactical powers and became an administrative and training command only. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten became SEAC's Supreme Allied Commander.

\* The road that would one day connect with the Burma Road via Myitkyina and Bhamo.

\*\* Southeast Asia Command.

His staff consisted of General Stilwell, Deputy Chief; General Sir Richard Peirse, Air Commander in Chief; General Stratemeyer, Deputy Chief to Peirse; General Gifford, Commander in Chief, British Ground Forces; General Auchinbeck, Commander in Chief, India; General Wheeler, Chief Administrative Officer; and General Wedemeyer, Chief of SOS.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff's plan for the invasion of Burma was given the code name of "Capital". The troops which it called upon to march against the enemy were probably the most polyglot group ever assembled under one command. Stilwell's 38th and 22nd Chinese Divisions, later to be reinforced by an American unit, Merrill's Marauders, were to lead off the invasion by advancing from Ledo into the Hukawng Valley; Mogaung and Myitkyina were the objectives. The 14th Army\*, composed of British, Nepalese, Indians, Burmese, and East Africans, was to follow a generally southeasterly direction from Imphal in attacking across the Chindwin River towards Mandalay. The XV Corps Indian and West African divisions were to make a second stab at Akyab by advancing southeast on the Mayu Peninsula.

Two additional units were directed to operate in the zone of the interior with the mission of harassing the Jap lines of communication, particularly in the zone of action of Stilwell's Chinese forces. One of these units, consisting of several companies of Kachins organized by Colonel Ray Peers, Commanding Officer of Detachment 101, OSS, was already on the ground with hide-outs throughout the Kumon

\* Consisting of IV Corps and XXXIII Corps; under the command of General Slim.

range all the way from Shingbwiang to Myitkyina. The other unit, a new Wingate IRPG, was scheduled to be glider-transported to three landing areas between Bhamo and Indaw (except one column which was to proceed on foot from Ledo to Lonkin).

According to plan, Stilwell's 38th Division pushed off towards Shingbwiang in late October, fought timidly at first but gradually developed confidence and had actually won a few minor victories (at the expense of the Jap 18th Division outpost units) by the time the 22nd Division joined it in January, '44. The fall of Maingkwan and Walabum on March 7th marked the debut of Merrill's Marauders who blocked the Japs in the rear while the 22nd and 38th steamrollered the enemy front and flanks.

The same period, however, found the British in an extremely embarrassing position on both of its fronts.

On the Arakan front XV Corps' 5th and 7th Indian Divisions had crossed the frontier in December '43 in a repetition of the ill-fated January '43 scheme of maneuver, that is, in two columns, one on each side of the Mayu Range. Buthidaung held out against the 7th Division, but Maungdaw fell to the 5th Division on January 1, 1944.

The gain was short-lived. Elements of the Jap 55th Division, employing the same tactics which had so demoralized the original defenders of Burma in 1942, slipped several divisions between the 7th Division and its left flank guard, the 81st West African Division. Before the British were aware of the Jap strategy, the enemy forces had seized Taung Bazaar and, shortly thereafter, Ngakyedauk Pass, thus encircling the 7th Division. Thanks to air-drop, the 7th managed to hold out while XV Corps Commander,

General Christison, sent additional troops to its rescue.

The 5th Division swung north to attack Ngakyedauk Pass from the East; the 36th Division and the 26th Division marched south from the reserve area in Chittagong, the former joining forces with the 5th Division effort, the latter pressing an attack on the eastern side of the pass. Contact with the 7th Division was finally gained by the capture of the pass on the 23rd of February.

Thereafter the British forces shifted south again and had captured Razabil and "the tunnels" between Razabil and Buthidaung when a serious penetration of the IV Corps area on the northwest Burma border called for the transfer of the 5th and 7th Divisions to the Imphal front.

As of the middle of April '44, therefore, General Christison, with only one division, the 25th, to replace the two lost to him, and with the monsoon ready to break in a few weeks, decided to consolidate the ground gained. He ordered the 81st West Africans to close in to the west, established them on a defense line from Taung Bazaar to the 26th Division positions at Sinzweya. The 25th Division occupied the link from the western extent of the 26th at "the tunnels" on to the east through Razabil and Maungdaw to the sea. The second Arakan Campaign was over.

Why had the 7th and 5th Divisions been so suddenly diverted from the Arakan to the 14th Army (specifically IV Corps) front? The 14th Army had obviously gotten itself into trouble.

In carrying out its phase of the "Capital" plan, 14th Army's IV Corps, consisting of the 23rd, 17th, and 20th Divisions, had pushed forward in March '44, advancing cautiously and with old-school-tie strategy for a survey

of the ground of future maneuver. But the Japs struck first. Three Jap flying columns, totaling three divisions\*, but off the 17th Indian Division at Tiddim; threatened the 20th Division rear at Tamu; and, by-passing the 23rd Indian Division at Ukhrul, appeared to be well on the way to Imphal and Kohima, the seizure of which would be tantamount to slamming the back door on all the allied troops then operating in North Burma. In other words, the middle of March found the Burma Campaign hanging by the thinnest of threads.

Stilwell was undoubtedly doing a great deal of worrying during this period of threatened Jap interdiction of the very important Bengal and Assam railroad, the supply lifeline of his Chinese and American troops in Burma; but he kept his fingers crossed and ordered his troops to continue their advance.

On one point all fronts were ~~not~~ in unanimous agreement for the first time during the campaign: the British had to act positively and aggressively, and they couldn't afford to fumble this ball. Too much was at stake; half-measures would not suffice.

The first step was to save the committed divisions of IV Corps from annihilation. With the aid of the 23rd Division, the 17th Division finally fought its way out of incirclement at Tiddim. Both divisions withdrew to Imphal where they were joined by the 20th Division.

In order to relieve the beleaguered battalions of mixed troops at Kohima, all other commitments in CBI area were momentarily shelved. Sufficient planes from the American ATC in Assam were diverted from the "Hump"

\*31st, 35th, and 15th.

supply service to transport the 5th Division, with all its impedimenta, from the Arakan to Kohima. The XXXIII Corps was ordered to march from the center of India to Kohima without delay. Lastly, the 7th Indian Division was flown up from the Arakan early in April.

Thus to the 14th Army's two corps fell the responsibility of stopping the Japs--IV Corp at Imphal, XXXIII Corps, plus the 7th Division, at Kohima.

Hit for the first time by a determined British effort, and with the monsoon arriving in May to unleash buckets of water from the skies, the Japs were in the end no match for troops which could be supplied by air when ground routes turned to quagmires; but it was a long, desperate uphill fight for the 14th Army.

By mid-May the sieges of Imphal and Kohima had been lifted and the Japs had passed to the defensive. By mid-July Ukhrul had been retaken by the British; by 19 August the last Jap resistance units had been ejected from India. Pursuit now became the 14th Army's primary mission, and, for the first time, was undertaken despite the monsoon, though at the reduced rate dictated by muddy roads and trails and the exhausted condition of the battle-scarred troops.

Stilwell meanwhile had forged steadily ahead, probably, however, with one eye fixed anxiously on the 14th Army front. After a gruelling 70 mile march in rugged mountain rain forests, the "Marauders" descended upon Myitkyina and seized the air-strip before the surprised Japs could put up an effective defense. However, the inability of the "Marauders" to follow up their initial success (due to exhaustion and sickness) resulted in the hurried commitment

of green American and Chinese troops who fled in panic in their first encounter with the enemy garrison of Myitkyina town. The Japs, taking advantage of the temporary confusion, brought in reinforcements and dug themselves in in sufficient strength to withstand the Chinese-American attacks until 3 August.

Thereafter, Stilwell, too, went over to the pursuit but also on a limited scale due to the necessity for regrouping and refitting his forces.

The first seven months of 1944 were the decisive months in the campaign to retake Burma; and August, as the month in which the British, Chinese, and Americans stood victorious on the north-central, northwest, and southwest battlegrounds, was the turning point in the campaign.

The crucial battles, which by odd coincidence had taken place practically simultaneously on three fronts, swept away the misconceptions, prejudices, and archaic military doctrines which had stood in the way of a vigorous concerted attack on the enemy ever since the grim days of 1942. Now, for the first time, all military leaders in CBI were willing to accept a few fundamental truths, namely: that the Chinese and Indians, when properly led, could match the Japs man for man and gun for gun--and beat them; that, hoary tradition to the contrary, troops could, and should, fight on through the monsoon rather than move back into the hills and face the prospect of fighting over the same ground again with the return of each dry season; that the logistical headache imposed by



hyper-secret agencies was one known as the OG\* Command. This command, with headquarters located in Washington, was charged with the responsibility for the recruiting and training of military personnel, both officer and enlisted, for assignment to small, well-integrated platoons whose mission would consist of long-range penetrations into enemy areas for purposes of destruction, straight reconnaissance, or a combination of both. Whatever the specific mission of a specific OG platoon, however, it was manifest that <sup>the platoon's</sup> ~~its~~ survival would depend exclusively on the intelligence, resourcefulness, and courage of the men comprising it; where it was to go, there would be no supporting arms, no friendly adjacent units, and no reserves to succor it when it got into trouble.

For that reason the recruiting board made every effort to appraise candidates accurately via personal interviews, mental and psychological tests, and physical fitness tests. Since long-range planning by the OG Operations Officer envisaged the use of such platoons in Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, Holland, Belgium, France, China, Thailand, Malaya, Burma, and the East Indies, the assignment of a recruit to a particular platoon was based mainly upon the foreign language requirement for that platoon, which, of course, in turn, was based upon the foreign country in which that platoon was expected to operate. The foreign country, in its turn, determined whether a platoon was to be trained for parachute invasion or amphibious invasion. Units scheduled for operations in Yugoslavia, for example, were given parachute training, whereas Greek OG's were trained amphibiously.

\*An abbreviation of Operational Group.

The OG Platoon which eventually arrived in Burma was trained originally for employment in the East Indies. The color of the native population, lack of definite pro-American reception parties, the distance of the islands from friendly air-bases, and the presence of strong Jap ack-ack batteries and interceptor squadrons in these islands dictated a submarine-LCR\* combination as the only sound means of penetration. Accordingly, the platoon was given amphibious training on Catalina Island before leaving the United States.

In June of 1944 it arrived in Galle, Ceylon where the LCR landing and launching techniques were subjected to surf conditions generally heavier than any that might be encountered anywhere in the Indies.

Towards the end of July two circumstances arose which completely changed the original objectives of the OG Platoon. First, OSS headquarters in Kandy, Ceylon, received orders from Washington to rescind all plans for operations in the East Indies and to concentrate instead on Burma, Malaya, and Thailand.

Second, XV Corps' plans for renewed and greatly intensified attacks on the Arakan front created a definite need for a number of small, specially trained, highly skilled amphibious units.

Reasons for the reconnaissance on the Arakan front have already been stated in previous paragraphs. But why the need for amphibious units? The answer to this question lay, of course, in the missions assigned to XV Corps. These were briefly as follows: (1) The seizure of forward air-strips to support British 14th Army troops

\*LCR-Landing craft, rubber.

who would be out of economical air-support radius of North Burma air-bases by the time they reached Mandalay. (2) The seizure of an advanced naval base suitable as a staging area for an amphibious assault on Rangoon. (3) The isolation and destruction of the Japanese forces defending the Arakan in order to prevent their diversion to the 14th Army front.\*

Mission (1) implied the seizure of Akyab whose all-weather airfield could be repaired and put into operation in a short time despite the heavy bombings it had received from American and British planes. Since Akyab was an island whose best beachhead lay in its northwest corner 8 water miles from Foul Point (the tip of the Mayu Peninsula), an amphibious operation was indicated.

Ramree Island, 60 miles farther to the south offered ground for several fighter strips, but it was more important as the objective for mission (2). Its harbor, and the channel between it and the mainland, offered protected anchorages for all types of craft and ships, from LCT to light cruiser and 3000-ton freighter.

Finally, due to the nature of the terrain and the tactics to be employed, the accomplishment of mission (3) necessitated amphibious landings on the Arakan coast. General Christison, XV Corps' Commanding Officer, taking a leaf from Stilwell's book of strategy, decided to use the 81st and 82nd West African Divisions and the 25th Indian Division as a frontal attacking force and to give the 26th Indian Division the role of the maneuvering element, committed to wide flanking movements which would

\*Jap Arakan coastal forces consisted of the 55th Division plus Coast Artillery Units.

place it in the Jap rear. Wide flanking movements in the Arakan area southeast of Akyab could be made in only one direction, however, and that was to the west and, hence, by way of the sea.

Analysis of the missions assigned to him had therefore prompted General Christison to accumulate a variety of amphibious units under his command. One of his organic divisions, the 26th Indian, was, at this very time (Sept.), undergoing amphibious training on the coast of India. The 3rd SS (Commando) Brigade, already well versed in amphibious assaults, was placed under XV Corps command early in September after a period of jungle training in Ceylon. Three motor launch flotillas, each composed of six 110 foot Fairmiles, had been placed in direct corps support.

In addition to the conventional army units, there were a number of small, highly specialized teams which were scheduled to play an important part in forthcoming operations. Among these were the following: two Special Boat Sections, each consisting of two officers and ten enlisted men and six Mark IAI Kayaks\*, for employment on pre-invasion reconnaissance missions; the "COPS", combined army and navy personnel organized into balanced technical teams capable of making pre-invasion hydrographic studies of tentative beachheads, and limited terrain studies of the areas immediately behind the beaches; "D-force", a unit with the equipment (recordings of battle noises, amplifiers, fire-crackers, which simulate machine-gun bursts, shell whistles, etc) and personnel (a regular T/O Battalion of Indian Infantry) necessary to deceive the enemy as to the location

\*A collapsible, two-man, canvas canoe, propelled by means of double-bladed paddles.

of the main landing effort; "E-force, an air-sea rescue unit which operated a flotilla of small, fast P-boats.

To the above group of special units was added, as of December, the OG Platoon. This attachment was the result of a P-Division\* staff meeting in the course of which General Christison had expressed a desire for additional amphibious reconnaissance units to supplement the efforts of his two Special Boat Sections. Accordingly, the OG Platoon was attached to XV Corps Headquarters for forthcoming operations.

In order to acquaint the Americans with British procedures, techniques, and SOP's, it was decided to send two of the OG Platoon's officers and six enlisted men to XV Corps forward area immediately to participate in whatever operations were to be undertaken by the Special Boat Section during the months of October and November.

In order to establish coordination with XV Corps, the Commanding Officer of the OG Platoon, taking his S(2-3)<sup>e</sup> with him, visited XV Corps Headquarters at Cox's Bazaar on his way to Teknaaf in September.

General Christison explained the missions which he would assign to the amphibious reconnaissance units under his command. The primary mission was to be straight intelligence gathering by means of night landings on the Arakan coastal strip, which, as far as he was concerned, included the entire Jap-occupied northwest coast of Burma from the enemy positions south of Maungdaw to Diamond Island in the Irrawaddy delta area.

The secondary mission was to keep the Japs in doubt as to the actual areas in which large-scale British amphibious assaults would take place. This was to be

\*G-3 Section, SEAC

accomplished by interlarding essential pre-invasion reconnaissance patrols with purely diversionary raids.

General Christison planned to issue a warning order to the concerned unit at least one week before that unit was scheduled to depart from Teknaaf. Simultaneously, an order, calling for the necessary number of motor launches to convey the unit to the "Drop-Zone", would be issued to the Royal Indian Navy Headquarters at Teknaaf.

At this same meeting it was decided to place an American liaison officer in XV Corps Headquarters. By means of radio contact (his own radio) with OG Platoon Headquarters, Teknaaf, he could then act immediately upon requests for maps, aerial photos, intelligence summaries, and terrain analyses submitted by the Commanding Officer, OG Platoon. Due to his knowledge of the capabilities of the OG Platoon, he would also act as an advisor to the General on matters pertaining to the Platoon. Finally, he would act as an expeditor of supplies urgently needed by the Platoon, always a matter of vital concern to a unit which is widely separated from its parent unit.

At Teknaaf, the Platoon S(2-3)<sup>c</sup> tackled the task of rounding up as much general information as possible on the terrain, native population, and the Japanese in the area of future operations. In so doing, he established personal liaison with the commanding officers of "E-force", "D-force", the RIN\*, the BIC\*\*, and the 3rd SS Brigade.

Very briefly, his findings were as follows:

(1) Terrain.

Tactically the Arakan is a coastal corridor which leads nowhere. From Buthidaung southwards the Arakan Hills sweep towards the coast, leaving only a narrow

\*Royal Indian Navy.

\*\*Burma Intelligence Corps.

corridor between it and the sea. Except for a labyrinth of uncharted animal trails, movement through the mountains from the coast to Central Burma is restricted to the An Pass and the Taungup Road.

The coast itself is generally uninviting except in the northwest. The beaches between Maungdaw and Donbaik are fine sand with occasional muddy stretches; from Akyab to Taungup the coast is chopped up into literally hundreds of small islands (interspersed with a few large ones like the Barongas, Ramree, and Cheduba), and mangrove swamps are the dominant form of coastline, yielding at infrequent intervals to small, muddy beaches; from Taungup south to the point where the Arakan Hills disappear into the ground of the Irrawaddy Delta, the coastline is rocky, although breaks in the reefs do, here and there, afford entry to narrow, but firm sand beaches, and several large bays along the coast will accommodate boats of river-steamer size.

The hinterland immediately back of the beaches is generally the same from one end of the coast to the other-- a mixture of flat paddy-fields, dune hills covered with scrub jungle, and numerous chaungs\*.

## (2) Native population.

Far from being a land whose peoples look, think, act, and dress alike, Burma is actually a federation of ten tribes, each of which has its own particular language and culture.

Since the country is dominated by the prosperous Burmans who reside in the rice bowl, the Irrawaddy River basin, the dialect of the Burmans is generally accepted

\*Burmese word for salt-water inlet; the word was officially adopted by the British and American military.

as the official tongue even though it is not understood by the Nagas and Kachins in the north, the Chins in the northwest hills, the Arakanese on the northwest coast, the Shans in the east-central hills, the Karens on the southeast border, or the Talaings, Tavoyans, and Salons living on the Martaban coast.

Of these ten tribes, only the Karens and Kachins were definitely pro-British at the outset of the Jap invasion. However, the abysmal failure of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere", becoming every day more poignant in Burma, was beginning to turn many of the Burmese against the warriors whom they had initially welcomed as benefactors. The Arakanese were among those expected to turn against the Japs because the coastal trade on which many of them had depended for their living had been swept almost completely from the seas as a consequence of the Japanese invasion.

It was expected, therefore, that many Arakanese might be willing to talk freely when contacted by reconnaissance parties. The important thing was to have interpreters who could speak the dialect. ✓

### (3) The Japanese.

Other than the general location of the enemy troops occupying front-line positions, very little was known about the locations of Japanese troops on the Arakan coast. Because of allied air-superiority at this period of the war, Jap routes of supply and communications were active on a large-scale only under the cover of darkness.

Aerial photo reconnaissance, however, had revealed extensive fortifications on Akyab, Ramree, and Cheduba Islands, the northern tip of West Baronga Island,



and in the Taungup and Sandoway areas. However, the size of the unit located in these fortified areas was a matter of pure conjecture.

On the basis of how little was known about the enemy and the terrain in which he had his lair, it was easy to understand why General Christison was stressing reconnaissance patrols.

Just how these patrols were planned, transported to the "Drop-Zone", launched, landed, and returned to base will be covered in the remaining pages of this monograph. The writer has selected only those operations on which his personal records are complete.

OPERATION "ABLE": RAMREE ISLAND, 16 OCTOBER 1944  
COMBINED BRITISH-AMERICAN PATROL  
SPECIAL MAPS A and B

The main battle positions of the troops employed on the three Burma fronts are depicted on Special Map A.

On October 16th a combined British-American six man patrol landed on the west bank of the Uga Chaung, Ramree Island; the landing point was approximately 175 miles behind the enemy front-line positions on the Arakan.

The missions of the patrol were as follows: (a) To acquire information of the enemy (size, composition, disposition, etc.) by means of personal reconnaissance and interrogation of natives in Uga and Zikha villages; (b) To make a hasty terrain study of the Uga-Zikha beach and the immediate hinterland; (c) To capture a Japanese soldier.

The transport craft consisted of two Fairmiles Motor Launches\*, one to transport the members of the patrol (plus their equipment), the other to serve mainly as an escort vessel; the landing craft consisted of three Mark IAI Kayaks.

\*Schematic diagram of ML armament on page 5, APPENDIX.

The patrol's time schedule called for arrival in the drop-zone at 2130. The ML skipper set the departure time from TEKNAAF at 0800 hours on the basis of an estimated average speed of 15 knots plus various time allowances for safety factors, including the additional hour needed initially to move the ML's seawards the distance necessary\* to prevent observation from the enemy coast during the voyage towards Ramree.

Excerpts from the patrol leader's order are as follows:

"(1) Procedure for taking prisoners.

If possible individual enemy will be stalked and knocked out from behind. Corporal \_\_\_\_\_ will do the knocking out by striking the enemy soldier on the back of the neck with an iron pipe. If the soldier screams, he will be shot immediately by Sergeant \_\_\_\_\_ with the Welrod.\*\* As soon as the prisoner has been knocked out, he will be stripped of clothing and equipment, bound with cod-line, and gagged. If he recovers sufficiently to walk, he will be taken to the beach on a leading line.

"(2) Fighting.

Patrol will fight only to get back to, or regain possession of, its canoes. If a superior enemy force is encountered, CO will give orally, or by whistle, the signal to disperse in Kayak team pairs.

"(3) What to do if unable to return to beach in time to depart for ML.

Latest time for leaving shore is 0300; ML will weigh anchor at 0430 in order to be 20 miles offshore by daylight.

ML will return to "drop-zone" on two successive nights between 2400 and 0400. Men left behind should try

\*Depending upon atmospheric conditions, this safe distance varies between 15 and 20 miles.

\*\*Welrod is a pistol equipped with a silencer.

to get a native craft to convey them to the ML; if that is not possible, flash a succession of dots seawards from landing position. If no sign from shore has been observed by ML by 0100, canoes will come into landing position there to remain until 0300.

"(4) Equipment.

(a) Per each man.

cap woolen	5 yds cod-line
uniform, green, two-piece	flashlight, waterproof
shoes, green canvas	1/3 K-ration
Mae West	1 D-ration
first-aid packet	100 silver rupees*
pistol belt	Burma Escape Map**
canteen	

(b) Additional for one man of each Kayak pair.

wrist watch, waterproof  
prismatic compass  
2 spare flashlight batteries  
medical kit  
jack-knife

(c) Additional for Corporal \_\_\_\_\_.

1 welrod

(d) Additional for Sergeant \_\_\_\_\_.

1 iron pipe (club)

(e) Additional for CO

1 #536 radio

(f) Additional for each canoe.

1 double-bladed paddle  
1 P-8 compass  
1 drogue

\*Must be dated prior to 1942.  
\*\*Made of silk. Northern half of Burma on one side, southern half on the other side.

"(5) Armament.

1 calibre .45 pistol

5 Thompson sub-machine guns

10 magazines, sub-machine gun, 20-round capacity  
200 rounds, calibre .45 ammunition.

1 grenade, hand fragmentation."

The ML's arrived in position about 1200 yards east of Button Island at 2125. The Kayaks were lowered into the water by means of a rope attached to each end, on the leeward side of the ML; Kayak pairs boarded this craft via the ship's ladder while others, on the deck, held the ropes attached to each end of the Kayak.

At 2130 the three Kayaks proceeded, line ahead, on an azimuth of  $350^{\circ}$  M; the irregular black land mass for which they were heading was about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles away.

At 2245 the patrol was within 150 yards of the shore. Instead of the mouth of Uga Chaung, there was, as far as the eye could see, a forbidding fringe of large rocks on which a heavy surf was beating. Obviously the azimuth computed by the ML skipper was in error. The patrol leader called the Kayaks together just outside the surf-line. Since Button Island\* looked rather large to the southeast, the consensus of opinion was that the objective lay to the northwest.

The patrol leader led the way to the northwest, paddling slowly in search of the break in the rocky reef that would be the entrance to the Uga Chaung. The entrance was found at 2350, and the Kayaks landed among rocks and mud on the west bank of the chaung just inside of a rocky peninsula which jutted out diagonally across the mouth of the chaung.

\*Prominent land-marks are tremendously helpful on night reconnaissance operations.

The canoes were landed and hidden behind the rocks; and the patrol moved off on foot on the muddy west bank but was halted, after 400 yards, by impassable jungle on the left and a marsh, extending to the water's edge, to the front. The CO decided, therefore, temporarily to abandon the attempt to reach Uga in favor of reconnoitering Zikha on the opposite bank of the chaung. On the return trip to the landing point the leading scout fell into a hole which upon investigation proved to be one of ten revetted firing bays in a trench which extended for 100 yards in a semi-circle corresponding roughly to the curve in the shore-line. Had the position been manned, the patrol could have been wiped out immediately upon hitting the shore.

The patrol crossed the chaung in the Kayaks, hid them under trees on the east bank, left one man on guard (there was greater likelihood of discovery on this side), and turned east across paddy-fields towards Zikha.

A dark mass 200 yards from their starting point proved to be the village, a promiscuous assortment of bamboo shacks on stilts. Finding one hut, more isolated than the rest, the CO grouped his men at the door and entered with his interpreter. When awakened, the native sprang upon the CO but was quieted and eventually agreed to lead the patrol to Uga where, he said, there was a Jap post of 2 men.

The patrol forded the chaung 300 yards north of Zikha village, arrived in Uga village at 0215. Since the Japs lived one mile north of the village, the patrol would not have sufficient time to negotiate the distance and meet the re-embarkation deadline of 0300. The CO decided, therefore, to go at once to the head man's hut. This personage, very frightened at first, became quite talkative and cooperative once his fears had been allayed by the interpreter.

After the interrogation was completed, the patrol returned with all possible speed to the east bank of the chaung mouth to investigate the defenses which the head-man had described to them. After examining entrenchments and a 20 foot watch-tower, the patrol re-embarked at 0255.

Since the original azimuth to the Uga Chaung was in error, the CO had no way of knowing the correct back azimuth to the ML. He attempted to estimate the number of yards he had been off course and, on that basis, decided to go back on an azimuth of  $110^{\circ}$  instead of  $170^{\circ}$  (the back azimuth of  $350^{\circ}$ ).

At 0400 the ML had not been sighted; the CO tried to contact it by #536 radio to no avail. Rather than resort to the use of lights until the last possible moment, he gave the order to continue paddling for another fifteen minutes. By 0415, with the ML still unsighted, everyone in the patrol was quite worried. After a few minutes of pre-arranged flashlight procedure, however, an answer was finally received from a point 500 yards to the west.

The ML skipper stretched a point and waited past the 0430 deadline. All men of the patrol were on board by 0438.

From the standpoint of future planning, the outstanding contribution of this first mission was the practical demonstration of the time safety factors which must be included to cover unforeseen and time-consuming circumstances.

OPERATION "BAKER": RAMREE ISLAND, 15 NOV 1944  
COMBINED BRITISH-AMERICAN PATROL  
SPECIAL MAPS A & B

The intelligence officer of XV Corps was still screaming for a Jap prisoner from Ramree Island. The interrogation report turned in by Operation "Able" had stated that there

were 500 Japs in Ramree town, and outposts of 10 to 20 Japs in Thetmochaung and Aunglabyin. The intelligence officer wanted positive authentication. He called for a second patrol to the Uga-Zikha area --- mission: to capture the two Japs stationed north of the village of Uga. The date for the operation was set at 15 November.

In computing the time needed, it was felt that with a correct azimuth and because of its knowledge of the terrain, the patrol would now have no difficulty in meeting the time schedule as set up in the previous operation. Time of arrival in "Drop-Zone" was, therefore, set again at 2130.

The general plan called for a landing on the east bank of Uga Chaung because the eastern entrenchment observed was at least 300 yards from the bank, whereas the revetted trench<sup>e</sup> on the west bank was only 75 yards from the water's edge. After reconnoitering the east bank trench, the patrol would move on to Zikha, pick up a guide and attempt to locate the Japs north of Uga.

Transport craft, patrol craft, individual and group equipment, armament, and operating procedures would remain unchanged from the last operation. The only major change was the addition of one Kayak team to the party, making a total of 8 men.

Additional special orders to cover special situations were included in the following excerpts from the patrol leader's order:

"(1) Initial Reconnaissance.

Reconnaissance of all defenses on E bank of chaung will be made before attempting to move inland. If enemy force is present and small enough to handle, signal to open fire will be shots from CO's pistol. If force is

too large, operation <sup>w</sup> will be abandoned.

" If defenses are unoccupied, patrol will move to outskirts of Zikha. Two men will reconnoiter village before house of guide (the same man used in the previous operation) is entered. Guide's house will be entered by interpreter followed by CO; balance of patrol in positions around house. Guide will be questioned about defenses on west bank of chaung. If these defenses are occupied, the mission will be abandoned. If defenses are unoccupied, guide will be instructed to lead patrol to Jap location north of Uga, or to nearest Jap post.

Plans for capture of Japs will be made after reconnaissance of their house.

"(2) Patrol procedure.

Formation: single file.

Distance between men: visual, but not more than five yards.

Contact and control: oral and visual.

If enemy is sighted: two men will go forward to investigate.

If fired upon: disperse in Kayak pairs, return to Kayaks."

On the night of 15 November the ML carrying the patrol party was at some pains to jockey<sup>e</sup> itself into a position from which it would give a more accurate azimuth on the target.

The Kayaks were launched at 2115. One hundred yards from the rocky peninsula which marked the entrance to Uga Chaung the patrol leader changed his mind about landing on the east bank because the bright starlight night would make the landing visible to anyone in the defensive position on the west bank. He decided to reconnoiter the west bank



positions before moving his Kayaks into the entrance to the chaung. Finding a break in the rocks 250 yards east of the west bank defensive position (screened from that position by a large rock), he landed his kayaks.

While the men were in the process of carrying the canoes into the jungle for purposes of concealment, a green flare went up from the defenses on the west bank, followed almost immediately by a white flare from the east bank.

The order was given to embark. As the patrol withdrew a large beacon flared up on the hill behind the landing point. Although the beacon lighted up the canoes, no fire was received. The time was 2240.

When the patrol boarded the ML at 2300, orders were given by the skipper to bombard the landing point. The bombardment, in which all crew-served weapons\* on the two ML's took part, lasted from 2305 to 2315. For the most part the fire of all weapons was either over or short; Indian gunners made no effort to adjust their fire although the high proportion of tracer would have made this possible.

OPERATION "CHARLIE": MAYU PENINSULA, 2 DEC 1944  
COMBINED BRITISH-AMERICAN  
SPECIAL MAP A AND SKETCH "CHARLIE" \*\*

The 25th Indian Division was slated to push off from its Maungdaw base, in its third attempt to clear the Mayu Peninsula, on December 10th.

Operation "Charlie" was one of several missions performed during November and early December to determine the size, composition, and disposition of the Japanese forces on the peninsula.

\*Per ML: 1 three pounder, 1 40mm Bofors, 1 20mm Oerlikon, 1 75mm mortar, 2 pairs of (twin-mounted) Vickers machine guns.

\*\*Large scale map of the area could not be found.

two agreed on the promise of the patrol leader to take them with him on the ML after the mission was completed.

The patrol pushed out at 2000; one guide was in the lead, the other was in the center of the patrol (single file). Since the hut was on the east flank of the village, the patrol circled wide to the east and approached the hut by marching west. Two hundred yards from the beach the scrub gave way to open paddy-fields. After another four hundred yards the village was discernible as a dark mass two to three hundred yards away.

Two scouts were sent forward with the guide to reconnoiter the hut. Upon their return they reported that the hut was isolated from the village by scrub jungle; it stood on a fairly steep embankment which sloped to a path running parallel to and twenty feet away from the front door. With the exception of the embankment in front of the hut and the path itself, the entire immediate area consisted of scrub jungle. The embankment in front of the hut formed a rhomboid. The shorter of its two parallel sides corresponded to the front of the hut; the longer parallel side, about 30 yards in length, lay on the edge of the path. In other words, the width of the clearing from path to house narrowed from thirty yards to about ten yards (length of the house).

They further reported a light in the hut, and sounds of talking.

The patrol proceeded to a point on the path 50 yards east of the hut. Here the patrol leader split the party in two, taking with him one guide, two enlisted men, and the interpreter; the balance of the party was left under the second-in-command to form an ambush on the path five yards from the point where it broke into the clearing.

shore-base for the reconnaissance patrol. The Americans felt that they would prefer to fight their way back out to sea rather than to scatter into the jungle and attempt to hide from Jap searching parties in the event of running into an ambush.

Consequently the OG Platoon was organized into two reconnaissance sections of three seven-man rubber boats each. Each section, capable of independent action, was composed of a reconnaissance party of seven men armed with the M-3 submachine gun and a beachhead party of fourteen men who, in addition to the submachine gun as a basic arm, carried an A-6 light machine gun and a BAR.

Ship to shore communications were improved by the addition of two SCR #300 radios, one with the Headquarters ML, the other with the beachhead party. Communications between beachhead party and reconnaissance party were to be maintained by #536 radio.

Officer personnel in this section consisted of a captain, reconnaissance section leader; first lieutenant, reconnaissance party leader, and first lieutenant, beachhead party leader. The Platoon itself was commanded by a major. Duties of mess, supply, boat maintenance, communications, and S(1-2-3) were divided among these five officers.

The first mission, that of landing near Kywibylin, a small village situated at the mid-point of the western coastline of West Baronga was part of a series of operations which had been planned as fore-runners to a large-scale amphibious landing on Akyab. General Christison naturally wanted to know what action, if any, would have to be taken to protect his right flank during the amphibious assault.

The patrol leader then placed his men and himself in the same relative position at the other end of the clearing. He instructed the guide to enter the hut and announce that a large force of British soldiers had landed on the coast.

The guide went into the hut. The first man to come out came straight over the embankment and started to run down the path towards the second-in-command's group. Ten yards away, however, he suddenly swerved and plunged into the jungle. The guide with this group yelled "Japarn", and the group opened fire, but it was too late.

The second man answering the description of the Jap MP (he had been described as wearing a white shirt) ran out to within three yards of the patrol leader's group, stopped, turned, ran back the other way with Corporal \_\_\_\_\_ in pursuit. Then he too plunged into the jungle. Corporal \_\_\_\_\_ shot him in the back, but he staggered on and disappeared.

The patrol leader called his men together to search for the body, but, due to the darkness and thickness of the undergrowth, nothing was found.

The search was abandoned, and the hut was entered and ransacked, yielding Jap clothing, equipment, a rifle, a grenade, and papers.

The party then withdrew to the Kayaks with all possible speed, taking one guide with them. The one who had entered the hut had disappeared during the excitement, thereby indicating that he might have warned the Japs about the ambush.

Re-embarkation on the ML took place at 2215.

OPERATION "FOX": WEST BARONGA ISLAND, 28 DEC 1944  
AMERICAN PATROL  
SPECIAL MAPS A and C

By the end of December all major allied fronts had moved forward against Jap forces which were now definitely on the defensive though still fighting tenaciously, still preferring death to surrender, and still holding the heart of Burma.

In the north the 11th East African Division had crossed the Chindwin at Kalewa and was in the process of strengthening the bridgehead over which the 14th Army was to cross into the plains of the Irrawaddy basin. Sultan's\* Chinese and Americans had taken Shamo and were patrolling towards Lashio.

On the Arakan the 81st West Africans advancing in the Kaladan valley had captured Kyawktaw; the 82nd had finally carried by storm that oft-attacked citadel, Buthidaung; and the 25th Division, driving along the seacoast, had taken Sinbaik and patrolled as far as Foul Point. Thus XV Corps was poised on the springboard which would eventually catapult it into Akyah.

By the middle of December the entire OG Platoon was in the forward base at Teknaaf, and operational SOP's had been set up and practiced by the time orders for the first all-American reconnaissance mission were received.

The two American officers who had worked with the British Special Boat Section believed that the British organization could be improved by the substitution of seven-man rubber boats (LCR's) for the rather delicately balanced Kayaks, and by the addition of a relatively strong beach-head group to stand guard over the landing craft and provide a

\*Stilwell was recalled to Washington in October.  
General Dan Sultan took over his command.

The landing by the OG Platoon proved to be strictly routine and uneventful. The LCR's were over the side at 2356, landed on a rocky shore in relatively light surf at 0047, proving that they could make better time than the Kayaks.

A native was contacted in his lean-to about fifty yards from the landing point. He was quite cooperative, talked freely to the interpreter, and stated with great conviction that the bulk of the Jap forces on the island (originally a company) had departed in late September, leaving only an outpost of 15 men in the northern tip of the island.

The story was confirmed by another native contacted by the patrol in a hut on the outskirts of Kywibyin.

The interesting feature of the operation occurred in the planning phase a week before the landing date. The normal planning procedure was followed in that the CO and S-3, after a study of aerial (vertical) photos, selected a landing point and alternate landing point which met the desired requirements, namely: that they be only mediocre beaches because the best beaches were more apt to be defended; that they be accessible both at high and low tides (rocks invisible at high tide may prevent entry at low tide); and that they be fringed with scrub in which to conceal the boats. The S-2 then hauled out his maps and prepared a terrain study designed to aid the patrol in laying out their reconnaissance plans. In addition he attempted, as usual, to find a prominent land-mark on which both the ML skipper and the landing party could guide in reaching their respective objectives. In this case his efforts were highly successful. Noticing that there was a spiney mountain range running

the length of the island, he drew a profile of a 4000 yard section of the highest ridgeline behind the landing points. He then drew another 4000 yard section of the foothills immediately behind the landing points. Due to a ravine which cut into the mountain range on a line perpendicular to the coast, the resulting profiles, when placed in their natural positions, one behind the other, presented two very definite notches so aligned as to provide a direct line of sight to the objective.

By means of this profile sketch, the ML skipper was able to locate the drop-zone without the usual jockeying; and the LCR's went straight into the beach without using an azimuth.

OPERATION "GEORGE": CHEDUBA ISLAND, 10 JAN 1944  
AMERICAN PATROL  
SPECIAL MAPS A and D

The British 25th Division took Akyab in a bloodless amphibious operation on the third of January. An L-5 pilot, out of gas, had made a forced landing on the Akyab strip the day before to become the actual conqueror of the island. All the Japs had flown.

Knowing that Ramree Island was next on the list of XV Corps objectives, the platoon was not surprised to receive the mission to make a landing on Cheduba, the island which lies ten miles east of the southern half of Ramree.

Typical of the intelligence which units of this type have to work with, the only item provided by XV Corps was an aerial photo which the photo-interpreter had dressed up with the usual red marks indicating trenches, fox-holes, antitank ditches, coastal batteries, barbed wire, and teak-wood stakes (protecting the beaches).

Worse yet, the area designated by higher headquarters, Cheduba town, was practically inaccessible due to mud flats along the coast both north and east of the town; the flats canalized entry to the town to the Chaung which bisected it; therefore the Chaung was bound to be heavily guarded.

The Platoon CO picked a chaung 4000 yards south of Cheduba as the more sensible approach to a ticklish situation.

The ML's left Akyab, the new OG base, at 1300. At 2350 they were in position. At 2400 the LCR's were over the side. Three quarters of a mile from the shore, the leading LCR halted the two behind it and went forward to investigate a dark object in the water which turned out to be a native fish corral\*. At the half-mile point the leading LCR pushed on alone to reconnoiter the landing point. A half hour later the red flashlight signal glimmered, indicating that all was clear. The mud flats necessitated debarkation in the water 400 yards from the shoreline. One man was left with each LCR and told to push back another 100 yards into the water in order to avoid possible detection from the beach. Obviously the scout party could have been slaughtered on its way through the mud to the shore, but luck had been with it.

The chaung which the platoon was supposed to have hit was nowhere in sight, so as soon as the beachhead group CO had set up his weapons and positioned his men, the reconnaissance party moved out to the south, the safest direction, in an effort to find the initial objective which was necessary as a guide-point.

The chaung was discovered after a march of 500 yards. By means of an oblique aerial photo, the CO had discovered

\*Circular bamboo fence built out into the water to trap fish during the change in tides.



a solitary hut on the south bank of this chaung which he had planned to investigate in the hope of finding a friendly native who could be questioned by the interpreter. Therefore the patrol leader, Sergeant \_\_\_\_\_, and the interpreter proceeded to swim the chaung with the balance of the patrol acting as a covering force on the left bank. This plan was abandoned almost at its inception when a dog appeared and set up a terrific barking on the opposite bank.

The patrol returned through the beachhead group, then turned east into paddy-field country dotted with small clumps of bushes which had to be sweated out individually. Passing through a lane of bushes about 800 yards from the beach, the patrol halted at the edge of a wide paddy field. Two hundred yards away was a camp fire with the figures of men silhouetted against the flames. The men were talking. The patrol leader, his interpreter following suit behind him, crept forward on hands and knees, then, snake-fashion, on his belly. The interpreter indicated that the men were Burmese. The patrol leader crawled back to the patrol and ordered it to crawl forward in a wide semi-circle, thereby moving the entire patrol to within ten yards of the fire undetected. When the patrol leader rose, the others rose with him and quickly closed the circle about the fire. The interpreter called out to the men to warn them against crying out and told them they had nothing to fear. ~~Some of~~

Immediately behind the fire was a hut which <sup>created</sup> ~~cast~~ a shadow suitable to the needs of two sentinels facing in each direction; they took their positions, and the patrol leader moved out beyond the immediate glare of the fire with his interpreter, one of the Burmese, and Sgt \_\_\_\_\_ as close-in security.

Each Burmese was interrogated separately. While this was going on, a fifth Burmese, on his way to the fire, was seized by the two sentinels on the east side of the hut. The latest prisoner carried a bamboo cylinder which contained a document covered with Japanese characters. Since it was now already 0315, it was too late to interrogate him. The patrol leader therefore decided to take him aboard the ML.

The patrol moved back to the beachhead with the five Burmese in the center of the column. The Burmese designated to be shanghaied was carried out to an LCR immediately, followed by the remainder of the party in echelon. The four remaining Burmese were instructed to tell the Japs that a large British force were preparing to attack the island in the near future.

Information gained from the on-the-spot interrogation, plus that acquired from the kidnapped Burmese, who was turned over to XV Corps Headquarters, contributed valuable information on Jap dispositions and numbers on Ramree Island as well as Cheduba.

The British 26th Division landed on Ramree on January 21, Cheduba on January 26. The Japs put up a fair amount of resistance on Ramree, none at all on Cheduba

#### FINALE

The platoon continued to average one operation a week for the next two and a half months--on Ramree Island where it captured one of two Japs who walked into the beachhead positions; on Sagu Island south of Ramree; on several islands to the east of Ramree; and on the mainland near Letpan and Taungup. It was during the Letpan operation that a 37mm shell landed in the LCA which was conveying one section of

the platoon up a chaung to an interior drop-zone. One man was killed, four wounded.

Near the end of March, with Mandalay in the hands of the 14th Army, and all of the Arakan coast as far south as Taungup in the hands of XV Corps, the doom of the Japs in Burma was sealed. There would be only one additional mission for XV Corps, the amphibious assault on Rangoon.

The OG Platoon was withdrawn and sent off to China to become Paratroopers.

### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The most outstanding characteristic of the long range reconnaissance missions herein described was the lack of pre-operational intelligence. This handicap was fully appreciated by the platoon officers, however, and its effects were largely counteracted by a combination of the following: (1) intensive training in the performance of standard procedures and in the use of equipment; (2) systematic studies of all available maps and aerial photographs; (3) exhaustive investigation of all possible sources of intelligence; (4) meticulous planning; (5) and, finally, detailed rehearsal.

By intensive training, the men acquired skills which made the handling of this craft, even in heavy surf, second nature to them. The adoption of SOP's to cover the mechanics of disembarkation, landing, beachhead security, concealment of the boats, formation of the land patrol, and re-embarkation; and the continuous training of the men in the application of these SOP's completely eliminated confusion during the approach to, the landing on, and the withdrawal from the objective. Oral commands in enemy waters and on enemy shores were thereby reduced to a minimum.

Granted that maps and aerial photos are generally a poor second to actual ground reconnaissance, a great deal of information can be gained from careful map and photo studies. In the <sup>"Fox"</sup>~~"BEE"~~ operation, an intelligent study of the map resulted in the development of a prominent terrain feature which actually guided the ML skipper and the reconnaissance party directly to its objective. In the "GEORGE" operation a hut which the patrol wished to visit was pin-pointed by means of an oblique photo. In all operations maps and photos were the basis for the selection of the landing--maps to determine the general area (at least one thousand yards from the closest village or main line of communications); photos to determine the specific beach.

The S-2 left no stone unturned in his efforts to add to the normally very meagre intelligence at hand for a specific operation. The XV Corps weekly intelligence summaries gave only the highlights; but the minor details, ignored by higher echelon, may be important to a small unit; and such details are dug out only by extensive footwork. Personal visits to special unit commanders (Special Boat Section, "D"-force, "E"-force, ML flotilla headquarters, the "COPS", etc.) occasionally produced a helpful tid-bit of information. For example, "E"-force furnished the S-2 with a list of tiny, unoccupied islands which were of absolutely no strategic value to the Jap or the British forces but which had been prepared\* by "E"-force as a temporary

\*"E"-force preparations of these islands for use of Allied airmen or sailors consisted of cached supplies--food, salt-water distilling equipment, matches, medical kits, signal flares, panels, and a radio (with instructions). These caches were marked with Burmese type tombstones and periodically inspected and maintained.

haven for shipwreck or air-crash victims; three of these islands were close enough to OG Platoon objectives to warrant inclusion in the "what to do if left behind" part of the orders issued for the reconnaissance of that objective.

By detailed rehearsal for a specific mission many of the uncertainties which may have arisen during an operation were eliminated in advance. For example, when it was discovered in the "FOX" operation that a landing would have to be made on rocks, rather than sand, landing techniques on a rocky shore were actually practiced on the seacoast near Teknaaf.

As to criticisms of specific operations, the writer feels that the "CHARLIE"<sup>operation</sup> demonstrated a reprehensible lack of aggressiveness on the part of the patrol leader in his planning of the second ambush. The surest way of capturing the Japs was to station one man within visual contact on the trail at each end of the clearing and the balance of his patrol under cover of the embankment. He should then have entered the hut with his interpreter, each prepared to shoot if necessary.

Failure of the "BAKER" operation is directly attributable to poor thinking on the part of the XV Corps G-2. After the "ABLE" landing the Japs had every reason to be alerted in the Uga area; therefore, capture of a prisoner in the area was a mission for a strong combat patrol, not a small reconnaissance force. Also, the landing should have been made a mile or two north or south of Uga, not in the exact area of the preceding landing.

The patrol leader of the "GEORGE" operation needlessly jeopardized the lives of his men and, therefore the accomplish-

ment of his mission by proceeding into the beach when the shallowness of the water should have told him that he was not in the channel of the chaung and hence definitely off his course. The march of the entire party through 400 yards of mud to the beach could have been disastrous had the Japs been on the alert.

### LESSONS LEARNED

1. The value of intensive training, both individual and unit, is clearly demonstrated in combat.
2. Even though a commander cannot physically reconnoiter the ground of future operations, he can still arrive at a satisfactory plan of maneuver on the basis of a map and/or aerial photo study.
3. Unit commanders should tap all possible sources of intelligence; small units may have facts in their possession which would help him.
4. Detailed planning for an operation and rehearsal of that plan reduce the possibility of mistakes during the actual operation.
5. Unit commanders must know the capabilities of their troops. Send no more men than are necessary to accomplish the mission, but, on the other hand, don't send too few.
7. A reconnaissance patrol commander must be capable of making quick on-the-spot decisions; and, if his original decision is wrong, he must be just as quick in amending it.